

Fisheries Habitat Workgroup
January 14, 2015 Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Jim Gracie, Roman Jesien Eric Schott, Roger Trageser, Matt Lawrence, Margaret McGinty, Shaun Miller, Alexis Park, Marek Topolski
Mike Cassidy, Jim Long, Helen Stewart, and Sarah Widman participated via conference call.

Updates:

Jim Long gave a brief description following up on the December conference call where we discussed the potential to develop County Fisheries Advisory Boards. (Refer to Minutes from the December Conference Call for more details.) Call Participants volunteered to explore opportunities to incorporate fisheries habitat interests in the process of updating local county comprehensive plans. (Volunteers included: Jim Gracie - Howard Co, Jim Long – Charles Co, Robert T. Brown – Saint Mary’s Co, John Page Williams – Anne Arundel Co, Alexis Park – Queen Anne’s Co, and Marek Topolski – Baltimore Co). Jim Long provided information on Charles County. John Page Williams (unable to attend) provided information to Margaret on Anne Arundel County. Alexis Park provided information on Queen Anne’s County. Thomas Brown (unable to attend) provided information to Margaret on Calvert County. Jacob Holtz provided information to Margaret regarding the legal limits of the Land Use Article. Local governments in Maryland have authority over land use planning. They are required to develop comprehensive plans that include the 12 visions stated in the land use article. Counties determine what bodies will be responsible for planning according to their governance structure. (Refer to the memo from Jacob Holtz for more information.)

Action: Jim Gracie proposed a question for all members to ask their county – What are the fisheries concerns at the local/county level? Are there any formal step(s) that address aquatic habitat in the development of the comprehensive plan? If so, what are those formal steps and who represents them?

Jim Long suggested the use of ordinances to improve fisheries. The value of using ordinances in permits and zoning was discussed among the members and addressed how the Environmental Review process may help with implementing ordinances/regulations.

Action: Helen sent the sensitive areas document (collaboration with MDP) link to all the members to review in order to see where we could include ordinances/recommendations to protect fishery habitat.

Members discussed learning more about counties and their comprehensive plans, as well as tiered watersheds and degradation.

Action: Eric Schott will invite someone from the Eastern Shore Conservancy to give a presentation to share what they have learned in regards to land planning in different Eastern Shore counties, including has and has not worked as they have promoted conservation of rural lands. This presentation will help us better understand how to address fishery habitat concerns at the local level. Jim Gracie will invite Teresa Moore, from the Valleys Planning Council, to give a presentation and discuss land use in urban areas. Both presentations will be given on the same day (possibly at next scheduled meeting Feb 11th or in March) to allow members to compare and contrast challenges and solutions in planning in urban and rural areas.

Jim Gracie led the discussion on Jones Fall, sharing what was mentioned in the prior Jones Fall meeting. There is a history spanning over 40 years and there are numerous groups that were involved in making the 40 years a success. We will reach out to these groups, as well as others, to understand what they are doing and see who would be interested in working together to promote holistic conservation and restoration of the Jones Falls. Jim agreed to draft a simple statement to share as folks reach out to groups involved in the Jones Fall, as well as the affiliates list the workgroup compiled. The idea is we will reach out to interested parties to see if we can work together to address common goals.

Additional topics of Mattawoman Creek's water quality, water clarity, flashiness, fish numbers, and SAV were discussed among members. What is considered the "new" normal at Mattawoman Creek?

Action: Margaret offered a presentation to address the findings of flashiness, fish assemblage, and additional project findings at Mattawoman Creek.

Margaret addressed possible ideas for future meetings: Is there interest in having Troy come and talk about comparing the language in comprehensive plans versus fisheries language – are there opportunities to bridge? Was there interest in having a presentation on road salts and conductivity based off of USGS findings? Would members be interested in MBSS presentation over stream health conditions in MD? Or would members be interested in a presentation over toxics (mainly endocrine disrupters)?

Action: Members were interested in having Margaret set up a time to have Troy speak. Members were interested in hearing the USGS findings – Eric Schott will ask colleagues who attended the presentation what the findings were and present them to the members. Then possibly see if members would like to see the presentation. Members would be interest in a MBSS stream health conditions presentation. Members were interested in a presentation over endocrine disrupters. Jim Gracie will contact Wink Hastings to have Eric Eckl present his work on communicating science.

Updates over Chesapeake Bay strategies were not discussed due to limited time. Margaret did mention that March 1st draft goals were due and that there is a website that if interested members can look at.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm.

Next meeting February 11th, 2015 at CBF from 2:00 – 4:30pm